

AMERICAN OCCUPATION WOMENS VOLUNTARY SERVICE

CIRCLE OF COOPERATION BULLETIN NO. 1

-Subject-

PROGRESS OF WOMENS ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE ZONE AND REPORT
ON THE FIRST CONFERENCE HELD IN FRANKFURT JANUARY 13 and 14, 1948.

American women living in the U.S. Occupied Zone of Germany are to be highly commended for their keen understanding of the obligations involved in carrying forward the Occupation Mission and for the interest and energy they have shown in their determination to play an important contributory role towards the success of the Occupation. They have been going about their work quietly, without desire for publicity or praise. However, the time is now at hand when Military Headquarters of the American Zone has expressed the wish that we work closely and in cooperation with the Public Information Offices throughout the Zone. The wish of Headquarters in this respect is prompted by the constructive desire that news of what we are accomplishing may be brought to the attention of our friends at home in America. This, we women believe, is also an excellent way of showing our appreciation of the assistance afforded us by understanding people at home, who have been so helpful in sending supplies. We are grateful for this opportunity of carrying our story to many who may not have been hitherto aware of what we are trying to accomplish. In this way we may perhaps obtain more supplies for our Zone wide program which has made such tremendous progress in the past year.

One of the motivating factors behind the thought that led to the formation of American Occupation Womens Voluntary Service was the realization, by women joining their husbands here in the U. S. Zone, that Germany's unconditional surrender had made the German people in a sense, our wards; that it was therefore our moral obligation to assist them to help themselves get back on their feet; that at the same time, however, this did not mean more was to be done for the Germans than for our former Allies.

Since the Summer of 1946, the work of AOVS has been going on. But it was not until more wives began to join their husbands late in 1946 that a nucleus of approximately eight women met in Frankfurt and discussed the desirability of organizing on a larger scale. In order to prepare the groundwork for possible Zone-wide operation, it was decided to set forth in a pamphlet the policies, principles and methods of procedure. It was intended that this pamphlet should be made to serve two purposes; one, to present a plan for working with needy German families, hospitals, etc., which could be adopted by various groups of women over the Zone or even by individual women desirous of playing an independent part in such a program; the other purpose, to use the pamphlet as an informative enclosure when writing home to friends requesting supplies for our work. This pamphlet attempted to anticipate questions which, it was felt, might arise

through lack of understanding, in the minds of individuals here or at home, as to why women in the U.S. Zone should be interested in working with the German people.

Because of our determination not to become involved politically, it was resolved to call upon the cooperation of the German Red Cross throughout the Zone; accordingly, meetings with the organization were held, and an AOWVS directive was sent to the main German Red Cross offices in this Zone. The directive called upon German Red Cross offices and their dependencies to follow the policy of AOWVS when approached by American women for cooperation, and to supply names, addresses and particulars of individual needy German families, of bunkers or air raid shelters, of needy German centers and communities in difficult circumstances, and where outside help had not been afforded. They were asked, moreover, to help American women find the most advantageous places to work, according to the needs of local U.S. organized groups or of individual women not affiliated with such groups. In return for the helpful cooperation of the German Red Cross we would help them do the work they would normally perform if they had supplies. It naturally followed, that American women, choosing the German Red Cross as a channel of cooperation, in effect became automatically members of AOWVS. However, it never has been the desire of AOWVS to control or interfere with the operations of women working individually or in groups throughout the Zone. Rather it has encouraged local groups to build their own programs under whatever name they chose. AOWVS merely offered a working plan. The plan had been tried and proven workable. It was considered one which could be adopted as a specific channel of interest either for organized groups or for individual women. Accordingly, AOWVS offered to make available established channels of cooperation and understanding so usefully afforded by the non-political organization of the German Red Cross. The purpose of the plan is double-barrelled. It aims to carry home to the German people, through a personalized contact and distribution of essential needs, the principle of the good neighbor; moreover, and no less important - it aims thus to combat anti-American elements in the Zone who attempt to hinder successful progress of the Occupation by spreading harmful propaganda. In other words, our personal contacts and practical interest in the Germans goes far to dispel unfavorable propaganda, and the suspicion that it undoubtedly engenders.

-And so, because of our program being the thing we all believed in, its popularity grew so that by June of 1947 we were able to estimate that about 3000 women had adopted it's line of procedure within their own respective groups to carry forward this humanitarian and constructive work.

It is fitting that we should explain the boundaries of AOWVS do not embrace dependents alone, for many women.- American and from among our war time Allies, engaged in office work through-

out the Zone deserve the highest praise for their generous contributions of their time and energy after office hours. In many military posts they are very active in German Youth Activities, Orphans Incorporated and other worthy specialized endeavors. It is our desire to gather as much information as possible about the activities of business girls who are carrying out programs along the same lines, so that we wives may give our support and assistance whenever we are called upon. For instance, in Frankfurt, the Business Womens Chapter of AOWVS operates a Day Room for transient German mothers and babies in the Main Station. They offer such comforts as cots, toilet facilities, soap, towels, hot and cold running water, cereals and cocoa, and a pleasant place to rest during the time necessary to wait for another train connection, or until they are able to contact their families or friends. One thousand German mothers and babies are given a helping hand each week. Members of the German Red Cross are in attendance during the day, and two business girls assist each evening in addition to generally supervising the project. The Frankfurt girls are very fortunate in that their project has been adopted by Stephens College, Columbus, Missouri and that supplies do not therefore present a problem.

In connection with business girls activities, I should like to mention that a new group of girls are formulating a plan to work with the German Red Cross according to the policies set out in the AOWVS directive. It is made up of former members of the American Red Cross. Either they have been civilianized and are engaged in business here, or they have been married and continue to live in the Zone. Their training, experience, and demonstrated energy and efficiency is well known to us all, and the AOWVS circle of cooperation will be most happy to lend assistance wherever needed, in order to help the former Red Cross girls to build and strengthen their individual program throughout the Zone.

For the first time since the beginning of the Occupation, representative women from all over the U.S. Zone, met in Frankfurt for a conference on January 13th and 14th, 1948 which was convened by the American Occupation Womens Voluntary Service. Its purpose was to discuss the progress of their respective groups in their working with the German people;- to discuss methods of distribution of welfare supplies;- to discuss problems and ways of perfecting our personal contacts with the German people, in order that no efforts in promoting a better understanding between the Germans and Americans will be wasted. One can understand that American women who are engaged in carrying out the underlying principles of AOWVS throughout the Zone, such as Womens Clubs, Hospital Auxiliaries, Help Projects, etc., are a tremendously helpful factor in furthering the Occupation Mission during the past year. What is more, these are in addition to hundreds of women not particularly affiliated with any organized groups but working independently. In this connection, I feel that the outstanding work of two organizations call for special mention.

The jobs they respectively perform enjoy wide spread praise. And they richly deserve it. One of these organizations is German Youth Activities sponsored by the American Army throughout the Zone; the other is Orphans Incorporated, which began in Frankfurt and has been the inspiration for the adoption of its program by several military posts.

At the recent conference in Frankfurt, we were fortunate to have had representatives of all these commendable programs. The conference was a highly successful occasion. From the very outset there prevailed a spirit of enthusiasm for cooperation not only among the groups carrying on their projects in connection with AOWS channels, but in programs working according to other principles of cooperation such as GYA and Orphans Incorporated. For instance, when a woman who might be engaged in visiting families and should be donated a supply of vitamins, it naturally follows that the channels of distribution afforded by Orphans Incorporated would be most beneficial; or, should an AOWS worker be sent a supply of educational literature - GYA would be given the material for possible use in their program. On the other hand AOWS workers would be in a position to distribute perishable foods which should be distributed without too much delay after a full distribution is made by an organization such as Orphans Incorporated.

After listening to reports of various activities from wide spread centers, we decided it would be most beneficial to meet once every four months. At this point, Mrs. A. B. Batty, President of the Munich Womens Club issued a very kind invitation for the next meeting in May which will be held in that city. The invitation met with all around enthusiastic acceptance and included not only representatives from centers who were present, but from various Military Posts who had not been contacted in time to attend the first conference. It is our sincere intention to help each other obtain supplies for the various independent activities, and at the same time to maintain a close friendly and helpful relationship between all groups over the whole Zone.

Women throughout the Zone have independently requested supplies for their programs, and now we are happy to announce that should an outstanding supply of considerable bulk be offered by any individual, -any particular group, -or business house at home, to a woman carrying on the work of AOWS either independently or with a group of women, -if assistance is required to arrange for shipping the donation from America, she should immediately contact the AOWS Co-ordinating Office, c/o Allied Contact Section, Hqs EUCOM, APO 757, U.S. Army, by mail or telephone (Frankfurt 22171). The donation will not lose its individuality of being sent to a particular representative, but we are in a position to help her have it shipped very soon and free of cost.

On the other hand, when donations are made direct to AOVVS, not mentioning a specific worker, - and which I believe is eminent due to the amount of recent publicity in America; the supplies will be sent to Frankfurt and from there distributed among the groups represented in the current bulletin of our Zone wide circle of cooperation.

The one regret which was deeply felt by every representative attending the meeting was that we had been unable to reach many more centers over the Zone, so that our network could be complete at the first gathering. However we hope that our next meeting in Munich will remedy this. Our main reason for writing this bulletin is that we may reach the Military Posts who were not represented at our conference as soon as possible.

The co-ordinating office of AOVVS in Frankfurt plans to incorporate in a regular bulletin, concise reports of progress, activities, including names of particular donors, women participating in deliveries, interesting reports of conditions and reactions, as well as a regular up to date list of two women in each center who are responsible first for publicity according to the plan of the Public Information Offices - as per attached directive, and secondly who are responsible for the acceptance of supplies which the Co-ordinating office may send from time to time and which can be distributed to local groups at the center.

In order to allow sufficient time for the first reports to come in from the Military Posts which unfortunately were not represented at our first meeting, as well as from the delegates who were present, we request that such information arrive at the Frankfurt office not later than February 25th. When all reports are incorporated in a bulletin which will be mimeographed, each contributing center will receive copies for their own files, and automatically be in a position to receive a portion of bulk supplies which might arrive in Frankfurt during that month. The bulletin will go to press between the 25th and the end of each month, so that they may be promptly sent out to each center on the first day of each month. Please present contributions in the manner you wish them to be printed.

At the present time there is a new AOVVS pamphlet being prepared, which will bring the old one up to date, and which we hope, will be ready for distribution not later than the middle of March. It will incorporate portions of the old pamphlet and new developments expressed in this bulletin. Each representative group of women we have been able to contact, will receive a few sample copies. They will prove extremely helpful to use as enclosures when requesting supplies from America.

It is suggested that a German printing press be contacted. They may request a supply of paper, but usually a miscellaneous supply is acceptable and can be collected from the local U.S. womens groups - in return the press will no doubt substitute their own paper which will allow the booklets to be uniform in appearance. Prices are very

reasonable and orders help to boost their production.

An excellent suggestion has been made which I should like to pass along. Why not have a special enclosure printed relating to particular activities of a local women's group, which could be folded and inserted in the front page of the booklet. This would give the reader a Zone wide picture of womens activities and a specialized account of a local independent Womens Club, Hospital Auxiliary, Business Womens Chapter or whatever name that particular organization has adopted. It would be helpful to cite how each group works in co-operation with German Red Cross and clergy when obtaining information to use in making personal calls on German families so that readers will understand where AO VS fits into our Zone wide circle of co-operation.

The co-ordinating office of AO VS in Frankfurt has been established to assist the progress of each and every independant group of women or non-affiliated individuals. Please feel free to call upon our office any time. New groups wishing to adopt AO VS principles of procedure will not find it necessary to obtain clearance to begin their work, for the plans of operation were long ago given the blessing of the Army and State Department.

With all good wishes for continued success,

Sincerely Yours,

Margaret Biddle

(Mrs. Anthony J. D. Biddle)